PLANNING COMMISSION

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Date: September 6, 2011

To: Comprehensive Planning Committee

From: Penelope Simison – <u>penelope.simison@ci.stpaul.mn.us</u> or 651/266-6554

Subject: Industrial Zoning Study

Attached is a resolution initiating preparation of an industrial zoning study. The study was authorized in the adopted *Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan*; specifically, Policies 2.21, 2.22. and 2.23 of the Land Use chapter; the regulation section of the Land Use chapter is attached.

Background

Concerns were voiced during preparation of the "Land for Jobs" section of the Land Use chapter regarding the loss of industrial land for non-industrial purposes. The City's Zoning Code historically has permitted a wide variety of non-industrial uses in industrial districts. Although this model has long been used in many cities, it was challenged in the last decade or more as developers around the country constructed housing in industrial districts, finding that industrial land was cheaper than residentially-zoned land and the rate of return on the residential investment was higher than for industrial uses. While this phenomenon was not widespread in Saint Paul, it did prompt discussions on how the Zoning Code could be strengthened to protect industrial land for its intended purposes of economic activity and a strong employment base while, at the same time, reflecting the complexities of developing industrial land in an older, urban area. The zoning study is intended to deal with these issues.

Scope of the study

The over-arching goal of the study, as noted in Policies 2.21, 2.22, and 2.23, is to protect and enhance the city's employment base. To achieve that goal, the study will focus on the following objectives and issues:

- Compatibility between industrial uses and non-industrial uses in industrial
 districts. Some non-industrial uses are not compatible with industry. One way to
 ensure that incompatible non-industrial uses are not constructed or operated in industrial
 districts is to require discretionary approval through the conditional use process. There
 may be other ways to achieve that objective.
- Revision of the industrial use list. Some uses clearly do not support the primary
 objectives of an industrial district, including economic activity and employment, and it
 may be prudent to recommend that they be deleted from the use list.

- **Design standards.** Design standards can be used to ensure that industrial districts fit into the community in which they are located. While industrial buildings and sites are designed to be functional, the study assumes they can also be an aesthetic enhancement to the surrounding area. In particular, the study will consider the design standards for the IR district and how they have worked since first implement approximately five years ago, and to suggest possible changes.
- **Residential uses in industrial districts.** Live-work situations are more common now than when the Zoning Code was first adopted. The study will investigate the extent to which residential uses in an industrial district enhance or detract from its core function, and how they may be regulated.
- Minor text amendments for industrial code sections. The study will respond to
 issues noted by staff in its continuing review of the Zoning Code and to Determination of
 Similar Use reports written by City staff.

Staff recommendation

The Comprehensive Planning Committee recommend to the Planning Commission that a zoning study of industrial sections of the Zoning Code be initiated, and that staff return to the Committee with recommendations for amending the Zoning Code regarding these code sections.